

BURMA

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, due to the current crisis in Burma, it is vital that even while media coverage of the situation in Burma has decreased we still maintain a constant watch over Burma. The regime's human rights violations are horrific. I have stacks of reports in my office detailing the dictatorship's use of rape as a weapon of terror, the use of ethnic minorities as human landmine sweepers, and many other abuses.

On September 18, 1988, the military forced its rule on the people of Burma, a rule that has been dominated by severe violence and oppression. Ever since, the people of Burma have struggled to survive under this brutal regime.

While the Buddhist monks and democracy leaders have received much deserved attention recently, the struggle of the ethnic minorities remains difficult and also must receive the spotlight of international attention. Article 2 of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, defines genocide as "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group." Reports make clear that the ironically-named State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) of Burma, the ruling military junta, has engaged in a deliberate policy to eliminate the ethnic minorities. The regime engages in a scorched earth policy, destroying entire villages along with food storage and production sources; use systematic rape as a weapon of terror; uses ethnic minorities, including women and children, as human landmine sweepers; engages in forced labor, also known as slavery; has the highest number of child soldiers in the world; and refuses to allow the duly elected leader of the country to take office.

While there is extensive photograph evidence of more recent massacres, I want to draw attention to a massacre that took place in Burma's Doooplaya district on April 28th, 2002. The regime targeted children. These photos, which show the bodies of the victims stacked neatly, are incontrovertible evidence of the regime's crimes against humanity and the increasingly horrific human rights situation in the country. The regime's soldiers shot and killed the Karen villagers in their quest to completely subjugate the entire country. The dozen who were killed include Naw Pi Lay, who was just a baby, Naw Daw Bah, a 2-year-old girl, and Naw Play and Naw Ble Po, two five year old girls. Nine others were shot and lucky enough to escape, including a six-year-old boy who played dead until the regime's troops left. What possible threat could these babies and young girls have presented to Burma's military regime?

The various ethnic minorities of Burma, which comprise approximately 60 percent of

the population, are not of the Burman ethnic group. The desire of the junta, composed of members of the Burman ethnicity, is to ensure that it remains the "master race," or maha bama. In 1988, the regime issued a blood assimilation order which stated, "With a view to attain success in accordance with our basic aspiration, which holds that our one race, the Burmans alone must inherit prosperity with an achievement of a long standing dominion. The easiest way to realize our above aim, we, the superior sons of the mainland of Burma are to employ the strategy of 'Blood Assimilation' against the female members of other non-Burman ethnic races. Our objective is to take marital possession of their women." Soldiers are instructed to dilute the bloodlines of the ethnic minorities in order to "purify" them and make them more Burman. While some might dispute the use of genocide in relation to this situation, it is clearly, at the very least, ethnic cleansing.

Astonishingly, other nations are enabling the dictators to continue their attacks against the ethnic minorities, democracy activists, protestors and Buddhist monks. Reports suggest that since 1989, the Chinese government has provided the dictators in Burma with over \$2 billion worth of weapons and military equipment. This Chinese weaponry has allowed the regime to quadruple the size of its forces to 450,000.

Russia also is supporting the dictatorship by helping build a nuclear reactor in Rangoon. The regime says the reactor is for peaceful purposes for medical research. However, Burma is ranked second from the bottom by the World Health Organization in terms of national health care, thus begging the question why they need nuclear medical research when there are barely even provisions for basic medical needs.

European Union non-governmental organizations recently released a report entitled *Indian Helicopters for Burma: making a mockery of embargoes?* The report provided details on India's negotiations with Burma's military junta since late 2006 and focused on the transfer of Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) to Burma's military. India, the world's largest democracy, has increasingly spurned democracy supporters in Burma in favor of increased cooperation with Burma's military regime, even providing Burma's ruling generals with tanks, aircraft, artillery guns, radar, small arms, and the ALH. Absent any external enemy, Burma's military rulers have employed these arms and military equipment against its ethnic minority civilian population, resulting in the destruction of more than 3,000 villages, the use of forced labor, and the rape and murder of thousands of ethnic minority civilians.

Even more appalling than the increased military cooperation and sales between the Government of India and Burma's military regime is evidence that the transfer of military hardware risks violating both European Union and U.S. arms restrictions in place against Burma's military regime. Parts and technologies vital to the manufacture of the ALH were provided by several European companies and two American companies, Aitech Systems, Ltd. and Lord Corporation. It is essential that our government immediately investigate whether or not the inclusion of American parts and technologies in the production of India's ALHs and the potential impending transfer of the ALHs from the Government of India

to Burma's brutal military generals violate U.S. export control regulations and the U.S. arms embargo on Burma.

Sadly, until recently, the international community generally has turned a deaf ear to the cries of the ethnic minorities, the refugees, the IDPs, and the democracy activists. While a number of states and international organizations currently have made helpful statements condemning the dictatorship for its actions, they long ago should have been helping the people of Burma. Action is what will bring change to the situation in Burma.

The SPDC regime deceives the international community again and again by saying one thing and then doing another. The international community, on behalf of the people of Burma, should make it clear that the oppressive dictators of Burma will no longer be tolerated—we do not want to remember another anniversary of the human rights violations against Burma's people. Instead, next year, we should be celebrating the return of democracy and freedom to the people of Burma.

I strongly commend the EU for increasing sanctions against the brutal regime and I applaud the government of Japan for cutting its aid to the dictatorship.

I also commend recent steps against the dictatorship by our Administration. However, I urge our Administration and my colleagues in Congress to act to support democracy in Burma and provide increased aid to the suffering ethnic minorities. We should exponentially increase the U.S. aid program to Burma by increasing aid to IDP, refugee, and democracy organizations, as well as by providing funding to help rehabilitate child soldiers, establish health programs addressing malaria, TB, and HIV/AIDS, support education programs, increase human rights documentation capabilities, and assist with protection capabilities. The U.S. government spent approximately 100 million trying to help the people of Serbia against Milosevic—the people of Burma are as important as the populations of Southeast Europe and we need to put our money where our mouth is.

Further, the U.S. government must take immediate steps to implement the recommendations outlined in the report on Indian helicopters and other weapons by commencing negotiations with the Government of India to cease the transfer of Advanced Light Helicopters to Burma's military regime; discontinuing all future defense production cooperation with India that might lead to transfers of embargoed controlled equipment to Burma; attaching to all future licenses for transfers of controlled goods and technology to India a strict and enforceable condition, with penalty clauses prohibiting re-export to states under an embargo to which the original exporting state is party without express governmental permission; and drawing attention to the high likelihood of that military equipment being used by Burma's military to commit ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in violation of international law including international human rights and humanitarian law.

The U.S. government and the international community together must press China and Russia to immediately cease their cooperation with and support for the brutal dictators in Burma. In addition, I urge the international community to press Burma's regime to cease the violence and murder perpetrated against the people, to immediately and unconditionally

release all political prisoners, and to allow the legitimately elected leaders of the country to govern. Further, the government of Singapore should freeze the bank accounts of the dictators.

Madam Speaker, it is time for the world to act to stop the honors taking place in Burma. While the military regime woos diplomats and guests in downtown Rangoon, Burma's people outside the realm of international scrutiny endure intensifying and acute repression. I demand that Burma's military regime immediately stop its campaign of terror against the Burmese people, and urge my colleagues to raise their voices for freedom.

I reiterate, public statements in support of the people of Burma are helpful, but only issuing statements is like putting a tiny band aid over a gaping, infected wound—it will not help where massive surgery is needed. The only thing that will solve the problem of the brutal dictatorship in Burma is to get rid of the SPDC.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in the House, the Senate and the Administration, and the international community to see that Burma's military regime soon joins the Soviet Union, Ceausescu's Romania, Milosevic's Yugoslavia and other regimes and dictatorships that now reside in the ashbin of world history.

Finally, I say to the people of Burma: You are not forgotten. We stand with you and will continue to work with you for as long as it takes to ensure that the people of your nation are able to live in peace and freedom.

IN RECOGNITION OF
JACKSONVILLE ELKS LODGE #221

HON. ANDER CRENSHAW

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Mr. CRENSHAW. Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize the admirable efforts of the Jacksonville Elks Lodge #221 for the outstanding service they have provided our nation's veterans. In these uncertain times where foreign radicals continue to pose a threat to our Nation and our troops continue to fight this threat overseas, their contributions are made even more significant.

Over the past 3 years, the 352 members of Jacksonville Elks Lodge #221 have raised almost \$42,000 and donated much needed supplies for our veterans. They have traveled almost 39,000 miles to veterans hospitals, nursing homes and private homes of veterans and have invested almost 2,500 hours of service to our veterans population.

Every month members of Jacksonville Elks Lodge #221 visit the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Lake City to volunteer their time for our veterans and have supported more than 100 homeless veterans each year through donations and goods to the City of Jacksonville's Homeless Veterans Stand-Down. Currently they have adopted four veterans whom they are assisting with shopping, groceries, transportation to and from medical appointments and other day-to-day activities. They have held luncheons and provided support for spouses and families of deployed service men and women and adopted units deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, sending them supplies and recreational equipment.

Taking into account their service for our veterans community, it is no surprise that at least three of the recent past State Veterans Chairpersons of the Florida State Elks Association Veterans Service Committee have come from this Lodge and their current Chairperson was selected as the Female Veterans Services Volunteer of the Year for the State of Florida in an award presented at the Florida State Elks Convention in June 2005.

It is my distinct honor to call the members of the Jacksonville Elks Lodge #221 my friends and neighbors and I am proud to represent them as their Member of Congress. On behalf of Jacksonville and our entire Nation, I would like to express my utmost appreciation and offer them our thanks for their service to our community.

RECOGNIZING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MENDEZ V. WESTMINSTER DECISION

SPEECH OF

HON. HILDA L. SOLIS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 22, 2007

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 721, which would recognize the 60th anniversary of the Mendez v. Westminster decision. This landmark decision ended segregation of Mexican and Mexican-American students in California schools.

On March 2, 1945, a group of concerned Mexican-American fathers, led by Gonzalo Mendez, challenged the practice of school segregation in the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, California. These fathers claimed that their children, along with 5,000 other children of Latino descent, were victims of discrimination by being forced to attend separate "Mexican" schools in the Westminster, Garden Grove, Santa Ana, and El Modena school districts of Orange County, California. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in favor of the families and held that the segregation of Mexican and Mexican-American students into separate schools was unconstitutional. This California case won access for Mexican-Americans to all schools in 1947 and helped lay the foundation seven years later for the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Brown v. Board of Education case.

Latinos are the fastest-growing student population. Approximately 32 percent of children enrolled in our Nation's public school are Latino. The status of Latino education suggests a number of missed opportunities from early childhood education through higher education. For example, families of 67 percent of Latino children under the age of three have an income that is 200 percent below the federal poverty threshold. Economic hardship is a reality for these families and has an adverse effect on child development and school readiness. In 2004, only 58 percent of Latinos had completed high school and 12 percent completed college.

Madam Speaker, it is important that Congress honor and recognize the civil rights implication of the Mendez v. Westminster case. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and learn from the lessons of this Nation's history. Like Gonzalo Mendez and the rest of the fathers who led the fight in Mendez v. West-

minster, we must continue the fight to close the education gap in our country. Educating our children is a commitment we must keep.

HONORING THE TOWN OF
BARNSTABLE

HON. WILLIAM D. DELAHUNT

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I rise today so that my colleagues in the House of Representatives can join me in recognizing the Town of Barnstable, Massachusetts for its distinguished achievement in being named one of 2007's "All-America Cities."

For 58 years, the National Civic League's "All-America City" Awards have been presented to localities that demonstrate an exceptional ability to rise to the challenges involved in building and sustaining safe, healthy communities. Toward this end, the Town of Barnstable continues to be a model for civic engagement, excelling in its efforts to involve the business community, nonprofit organizations, and citizens in developing ingenious solutions to local problems.

While the Town of Barnstable has applied the same cooperative approach in tackling a wide array of challenges, three in particular merit its designation as one of this year's ten "All-America Cities." Under its visionary "economic development stimulus plan," the Town of Barnstable breathed new life into the Main Street and waterfront areas of downtown Hyannis. This initiative helped to promote growth in an environmentally and socially responsible way, while boosting the area's cultural richness and scenic beauty.

Thanks to the Town's multi-pronged Affordable Housing Plan—an ambitious project that aims to secure 1,000 units of housing over a 10-year period—residents making below 80 percent of the area's median income will have expanded opportunities to make home ownership a reality.

Finally, the Town's creation of a Youth Commission has ensured the area's young people have a strong voice in the democratic process, advising the Town Council on the legislation and issues that matter most to Barnstable's youth and families.

It gives me pride to see the Town of Barnstable receive national attention for all the hard work and dedication that I have long admired. As we pause to reflect on this prestigious honor, I want to commend all the residents of Barnstable for their collective efforts to make the community a better place to live and work.

I particularly want to thank Town Manager John Klimm for his admirable leadership, and for seeing through the initiatives that have made Barnstable an "All-America City." Congratulations on an award well-deserved. For today, tomorrow, and long into the future, I have great confidence that the Town of Barnstable will continue to serve as a model for communities all across the country.